

EXHIBIT L

Bernie Worrell



Academy: New York 2013

Bernie Worrell first came to prominence as a founding member and musical director of Parliament-Funkadelic, radically charting the course of emerging keyboard technology during the golden age of synthesis. After departing Parliament-Funkadelic, Worrell resurfaced with the revamped Talking Heads lineup for several albums. Worrell's colorings, this time delivered via new digital keyboards, were central to the recasting of group leader David Byrne's musical ideas through African rhythms. In the years since he left Talking Heads, Worrell has been a phenomenally prolific studio musician, contributing to projects by the likes of Bill Laswell, Keith Richards, the Pretenders, and Deee-Lite. At the same time, he's among the most-sampled musicians ever, with Digital Underground, De La Soul, Dr. Dre, Snoop Dogg, Ice Cube, and countless others having acknowledged his timeless grooves by building their tunes around his signature riffs.



Hosted by Torsten Schmidt
Audio Only Version

Transcript:

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

Please give a very, very warm hand and a very warm welcome to a man without whom neither, I'd say, Derrick May, Dr. Dre, or Dorian Concept would do what they do today. So please, Mr. Bernie Worrell. *[applause]*

You have been born not too far away from here, right?

BERNIE WORRELL

Jersey.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

Yeah. So what was Jersey like back then? Was it all *Sopranos* already?

BERNIE WORRELL

Probably so. Maybe more so, when it was the real godfathers.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

So what sort of household did you grow up in? What were your parents doing?

BERNIE WORRELL

OK. *[laughs]* My father was a truck driver, ran his own business. As my mother would say, he was in the streets. My mother, church-going lady. Sang in the choir. She didn't believe in any one set denomination, or religion. Her friends used to say, "Why're you going to the Catholic church?" She was Baptist, but she'd go wherever she wanted. She said: "There's one God," and no one's gonna tell her where, or dictate, where she wants to go worship. I guess, that's where I get my freedom, because don't tell me what I'm gonna do; I'll do the opposite. I will be free. And that's how I play. I mix all genres of music.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

I understand in the Baptist church, the music is kind of different than in the Catholic church, right?

BERNIE WORRELL

Yes, but it's all music. And it could be related.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

So, I don't know whether we start the whole thing already, but you speak to a lot of modern-day techno, or R&B, or whatever, producers, and they would go, "Hey, of course, it all goes back to church music in the end."

BERNIE WORRELL

OK. Which goes back to Africa, the chants, or the plantation. My thing is: everything is related.

really, really early, right?

BERNIE WORRELL

I don't deal with realization. I was born with perfect pitch, so anything I hear I can play. Whatever the gift God gave me, I don't sit and decipher; I just do it. And the way I hear - everyone has a different way of hearing - so the way I hear, I can hear the relationships. I can hear the same scale or mode in a classical piece, you can find the same mode in a gospel hymn. Same mode in a Indian raga, same mode in a Irish ditty, same mode in a Scottish ditty, or whatever you wanna call it. Same mode in Latin music, African. It's all related. It's how you hear it. And then on hearing and recognising, "Oh, yeah. I heard that in a pop song." Same chord progression, you know? Everything is related. I just happen to be able to hear that.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

And also perfect pitch is something that happens inside of you as well. I mean, it stays with you even after five decades of touring and probably not hearing that proper anymore, right?

BERNIE WORRELL

Yes, the only thing nowadays, I say the last couple two or three years, other people still test me, because they wonder how do I do that. Nowadays, I go off by only a half-step. Most of the time it's on, but when it's off, it's just by a half-step. So I can tell the pitch of feedback. Some of the monitor engineers, if you don't have your own monitor man on the road, you go through different crap. Nothing against you guys, but some of the youngsters don't know how to tune out or find the frequency of your microphone from the feedback doing sound check, and I'll hum it when it happens. First of all, I have hearing loss, and I can't take certain frequencies nowadays, but I can hum it. I say, "It's here!" [*hums*] And I don't understand how they can't hear that. The high ones especially, or any of them. I'll hum it through the mic, which is feeding back. "It's right here!" Then I'll play it on the keyboard. "It's this note. Find it!" Anyway...

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

So you're like a modern-day funk Beethoven then, in a way.

BERNIE WORRELL

Whatever, I don't deal with labels. That's another thing: labels.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

Can you take us back to Plainfield, New Jersey, a little bit and tell us who these folks Billy Nelson and Eddie Hazel were.

BERNIE WORRELL

Ghetto geniuses from the projects. Who were given a gift and God brought it all together.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

What was their gift?

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

Well, we'll get some of your fingers involved in a little bit.

BERNIE WORRELL

I speak by playing. Just wanna let y'all know that I'm just... Short responses, and that's that.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

That's totally fine. Everyone in here has been on this couch yesterday, so they know you're playing. They sympathize.

BERNIE WORRELL

I get tongue-tied.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

We understand that there was a certain barbershop involved as well, right around that time. What was going on there?

BERNIE WORRELL

Anything and everything. That's where I first met George Clinton. When my family first moved to Plainfield from Long Branch. I was born in Long Branch, New Jersey, which is down by the shore. We moved to Plainfield and the word is that people heard that this so-called genius or whatever, somebody moved to town.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

How old were you back then?

BERNIE WORRELL

I was 8-years-old.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

And you've been playing the piano for how long?

BERNIE WORRELL

At that time, five years. I started when I was 3 1/2. I'm classically trained - my first concert was at 4-years-old. I wrote a piano concerto at 8-years-old and performed three concertos with part of the Washington Symphony and Plainfield Symphony Orchestra at 10-years-old. And then private lessons and all that stuff.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

What were you playing? Like, Schubert and Mozart and...

BERNIE WORRELL

Schubert, Mozart, Beethoven, Bach, Chopin, Debussy and Ravel.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

Do you still do some of that for your own leisure now and then?

BERNIE WORRELL

you passed that.

BERNIE WORRELL

Not passed that. I play, when I'm playing live, I mix it. I mix musics. I don't stick to one thing. I guess, I still have it in my head. They used to put classical music on a pedestal. And I don't like that. So I took it down. My way. Because nothing is above anything. Everything is music, everything is related. So if you're gonna put something, "Oh, this is this," I don't think so. Music is music. It depends on the person, the artist, whether they be an instrumentalist, vocalist, composer. Depends on the person, how they hear it. And what you do with your gift and your talent. In my opinion.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

At that time, your mom wanted you to be a professional concert pianist, right?

BERNIE WORRELL

Right, that's why, another reason... No, I don't do what I'm told.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

From what we hear, something else happened around that time, and I'm not sure whether we get the feed here... *[technical problems ensue]* It's like in chemical lessons at school. It all worked fine when we tried this earlier.

BERNIE WORRELL

It's like something that has stuck with me through the years since college days. In a harmony class, our teacher, our professor, first of all, you have to learn all the rules. You learn your harmony and theory and the basics. And after you've done all that, you break the rules. You have to learn the basics first and see how things work. Then throw that out and do what... that's your guideline. But after that, you break it. Or however you wanna put it.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

Hmm, well, apparently the server's down. So that's the great thing about modern cloud computing.

BERNIE WORRELL

One of my lead guitarists, band leaders in one of my groups, he knows how I feel about stuff - this is y'all's generation - he knows how I feel about stuff. He calls it "wreck-nology." That's...

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

What we were going to play, to create for your theatrical effect, was a young Elvis Presley on the Ed Sullivan show, performing a song called "Teddy Ready."

BERNIE WORRELL

"Teddy Ready"?

TORSTEN SCHMIDT



from path of the concert pianist.

BERNIE WORRELL:

From this “Teddy Ready”?

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

Just seeing Elvis on television and that stuff.

BERNIE WORRELL

That wasn’t Elvis, it was The Beatles on Ed Sullivan. And to me, they mixed all genres, including instrumentation. Mr. Martin, who’s coupled with them, I mean, that stuff was different. It opened a whole new world.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

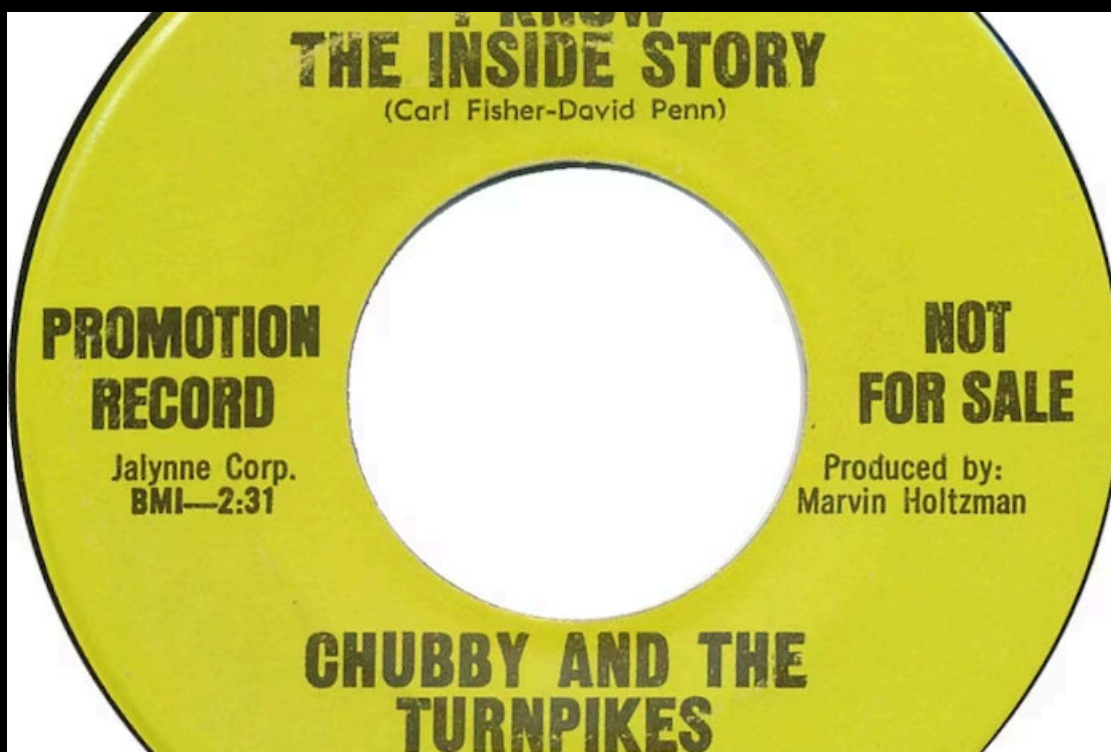
You mean the producer?

BERNIE WORRELL

Yes, George Martin, yes.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

Let’s try whether the audio works. ‘Cause this is a track that you supposedly were involved as well.



Chubby & The Turnpikes – “I Know The Inside Story”

(music: Chubby & the Turnpikes - “I Know the Inside Story”)

BERNIE WORRELL

[looks pleasantly surprised] Where’d you get that?

BERNIE WORRELL

Who were they?

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

Yeah.

BERNIE WORRELL

Vocal group from Providence, Rhode Island. A black Portuguese family, brothers, who were known as Chubby & The Turnpikes when I was in college up at the conservatory in Boston. And their home base was Jim Nance, who was a Boston Patriots fullback at the time. He had a nightclub there. And when I was in college, I was playing in nightclubs. Yeah. *[laughs]*

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

There's a lot of country songs about playing in nightclubs, as well.

BERNIE WORRELL

I met them and I became their bandleader and that was part of my rebel part of me, of doing something else besides classical music. And I guess rebelling against my mom and stuff.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

It's kind of crazy to imagine that was rebellious, as well. 'Cause I mean, it just sounds so harmonious and warming and welcoming.

BERNIE WORRELL

The playing, that wasn't rebellious. Just the fact that I was playing in clubs at night and not strictly in school and whatnot. "Don't keep me in! Don't fence me in!"

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

I can see that.

BERNIE WORRELL

You know the group, that's Tavares now...

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

Did you play on any of the Chubby & The Turnpikes stuff that was recorded after Capitol?

BERNIE WORRELL

After Capitol, no.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

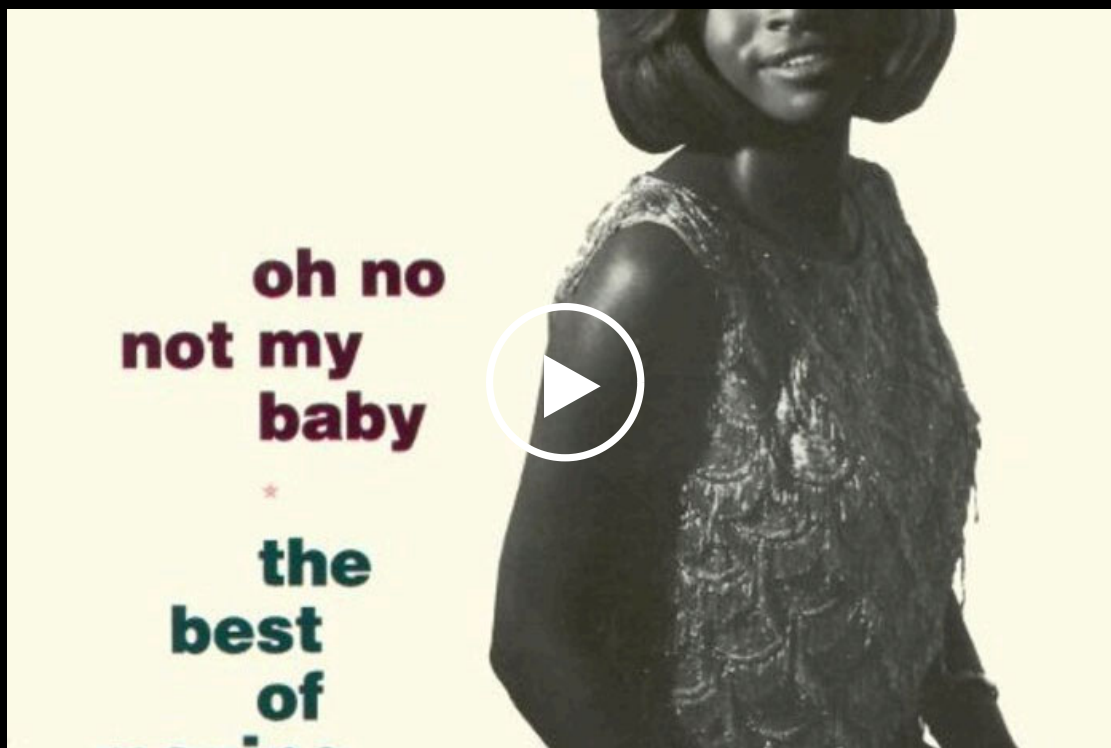
Because that's the other thing, when you go through things that you're associated with, like a lot of the actual factual information out there is really scarce. Sometimes it's really hard to figure out, like, "Did he play on that or not?" And you really have to listen, and then sometimes you hear like, "Oh, yeah. Yeah, that's him." Even though it's a lot harder in those days. Like, when you were breaking away from the

BERNIE WORRELL

I didn't look up to them, I was influenced. No one should look up to anybody. What's that mean? OK, Ray Charles, Keith Emerson, Thelonious Monk, Herbie Hancock. Victor Borge, he was this Danish keyboardist who's one of my favorite, my antics on-stage now, where I get a lot of my stuff from, because he'd be a serious classical piece and then fall off the bench. Just stuff. And that's my other way of... I guess... so serious. Have some fun. Put some humor into it. That's what I like to do. I play, 'Nah nah nah nah', in the middle of a classical piece. I'll do it on purpose, just to, "Man, wow, where'd that come from?" Make you think. "Don't be so uptight, we have a song now. If you want things to be alright, stop being so uptight and move on." Part of the uptightness in you, if you don't let it go, you're gonna be... It's like a P-Funk song: "Free your ass and your mind will follow." Breathe.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

To give you a little bit of a breather, here is another song.



Maxine Brown – "Oh No, Not My Baby"

(music: Maxine Brown - "Oh No, Not My Baby")

[when the vocals begin, Worrell hangs his head and slumps over, laughing]

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

So whose voice is this we're listening to there?

BERNIE WORRELL

Maxine Brown. Famous R&B vocalist, who, I became her musical director after right out of college. *[laughs]* Yeah.



BERNIE WORRELL

[laughs]

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

What does the work of a musical director consist of, so that we understand?

BERNIE WORRELL

It's the bandleader. I would audition different guitarists and drummers that would come and go, arrange the music, teach her songs to the different band members. Because, you know, people would come and go, that's another pain. Because once you get used to somebody and, you know, the chemistry was there, then all of a sudden the drummer leaves, or the guitarist, and you got to start all over again.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

How many gigs would you play during an average month at that time?

BERNIE WORRELL

That would depend on how many bookings that her agency was getting.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

But was it more like steady club gigs, or were you touring?

BERNIE WORRELL

Um... we did a Sam & Dave tour, which was another R&B vocal duet. We did a lot of dates with Chuck Jackson, who was another R&B, male, famous vocalist. Some gigs with Wilson Pickett. But there wasn't a lot of tours, so to speak, but just club dates. Never did West Coast. She's mostly Midwest and East Coast when I was with her.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

I guess, going to the South wasn't really that popular around that time, right?

BERNIE WORRELL

Not around that time.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

You played gigs in Boston with young Tammy Terrell as well, right?

BERNIE WORRELL

[laughs] Yes, she was known as Tammy Montgomery back then. Yeah, I backed up after Tavares I was the organist in a trio at Basin Street South, which is a club in Boston where, every weekend there'd be a different artist, vocalist, that would come in. And some comedians. We were the house band and there was like a revue. You had your dancers, then a comedian, then the vocalist. So I played behind Tommy Hunt, Freddy Scott, Tammy Terrell, who I met through Laura Falama. Pigmeat Markham, Moms Mabley. You might know these people. I don't know if the kids would. They were famous black comedians back in the day. Dionne Warwick. Another art form is accompanying. I used to accompany all the opera vocalists, the opera students, in their lessons and their promotional recital. So, to accompany



breathing, when to support, when to pull back, when to just lay there, when to spike it up a little bit.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

A lot of these people have gone on and had great careers and with great careers, even greater egos, but I guess at that time it's just crazy for us to hear that a lot of those people were on the same circuit, and probably in a not-as-privileged position. And I want to fact-check something else: was one of them really, like, a 'Miss Tan Boston'? Is that what it was called?

BERNIE WORRELL

Oh yeah, who was that? Frowly Holiday?

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

But it just seems outrageous to us now, that it would be, like, "Tan?" I mean, that was like a really different climate for you to work in then, I guess, walking around now, right?

BERNIE WORRELL

Um. I'm not sure what you're...

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

What was the tan referring to?

BERNIE WORRELL

I guess, they didn't want to say black. It's like, in the black neighborhood back then, a light-skinned black person was called, when there'd be dissension or people talking about each other, a light-skinned black person would be called "high yellow," or mulatto. There was racism within the race. So... In Boston, with all the stuff that was going on, you say "Miss Tan Boston," instead of, just saying that she's black. Or "Redbone," that's another term.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

How was Detroit different to Boston?

BERNIE WORRELL

Detroit? Crazy.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

I mean, this was before all, when it was still a city, right?

BERNIE WORRELL

Yeah. I didn't like Detroit that much. George Clinton and I, we moved to Canada, Toronto. We used to hang out with, we all played together with Mitch Ryder & The Detroit Wheels, Ted Nugent. We did a lot of Funkadelic, we used to open for Ted on the festivals. For me, the only thing was Motown. I marveled at, when I first saw the Motown studios, they were houses. And all this great music came from, out of those buildings.

BERNIE WORRELL

Yeah, right. I mean, it was obscene. Wow. That sign. Hitsville USA. Houses. It's phenomenal.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

Did you do any session work there before you worked with George?

BERNIE WORRELL

No, but while with P-Funk, I'm playing on a lot of... See, I don't talk about myself.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

You're doing good, you're doing good.

BERNIE WORRELL

I'm playing on a lot of Holland-Dozier-Holland, which was Invictus Records, after they left Barry Gordy. I'm playing on Chairmen Of The Board's hits, The Honeycombs, Freda Payne's "Band of Gold," lots of stuff. You probably got it. And also Johnny Taylor's two-million seller. Me and Glen Goins and Bootsy Collins, we're playing on "Disco Lady." We actually wrote the song, which they didn't give us credit for. He had a two-million seller and we got a \$500 bonus and session fee. I don't wanna. 'Cause that shit makes me... Excuse me. Anyway.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

If it stinks, you need to call it out. Well, let's probably move to something merrier.



Parliament – "Flash Light"

(music: Parliament - "Flash Light")

Are the fingers getting itchy when you hear that?



TORSTEN SCHMIDT

So what have you been listening to?

BERNIE WORRELL

I don't listen to... When I listen to, I listen to reggae, Marley, man, Jamaica. Or college stations, or public radio.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

So, can you tell us a little more about the story behind that song and what you're doing in it, and all that?

BERNIE WORRELL

Uh, I'm known for layering. So...

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

I mean, if the trainspotters are right and one watches the videos of you playing closely, you do play, like, multiple things at the same time, or let's say a bass note is not always just the root note but you do octaves of it and stuff as well, right?

BERNIE WORRELL

Well, this track, Bootsy had the track with just guitar and drums. And he didn't want the track, so he brought it to George and said: "Here's a groove." So all there was was a drumbeat, rhythm guitar, and everything else besides the vocals, everything else is me. So I laid the Moog synthesizer, the Minimoog. The old one, not the new stuff. The old one, which is... I told Bob Moog, they sent one of his technicians, the new stuff still isn't as fat, got the meat, like the old ones. So that's why I like the vintage stuff. And it's been proven, a lot of people, once they hear, though, they say: "You're right." So that's another thing I don't understand about they make the new models coming up, but why not keep the guts of its predecessor, with all the new gadgets and whatnot? It looks pretty and everything, but it doesn't sound the same. Well, whoopy-doo, what's that about? So anyway, I laid the bass line. There's three Moog's: there's the bass line, then there's the little cartoony one, I'm having fun. It's a conversation, that's how I speak. And then there's a string ensemble.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

That was an ARP, right?

BERNIE WORRELL

ARP String Ensemble. I just laid one track at a time, and sometimes I'll listen to the preceding track while I'm overdubbing a new track. Sometimes I'll say, "No," before I tell everybody - like the engineers - I just wanted to see, not hearing what I did before, and playing, if it would all fit, and it everytime... everything is related. So I could hear the track and hear what I'm doing and just playing, or not hear it, and it will still fit, it'll be related. And I do that with all the stuff I've done over the years.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

How did you deal with, like, you know, fans expecting that song live and then trying to duplicate that on the road? I mean, you must've had at least four different roadies



Yeah, I didn't do it. [laughs] Yeah, well, the Mothership tour, we had three tour buses, three semis, and...

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

You even toured with what, Clavinets, the Yamaha CP?

BERNIE WORRELL

Yamaha electric Baby Grand, Minimoog, Hammond organ, ARP Pro Soloist. Pedal board.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

A CS-80 was amongst that, as well?

BERNIE WORRELL

Yeah, the Yamaha.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

But I mean, that alone weighs, like, what? 250 kilos or something?

BERNIE WORRELL

Yeah, well, I didn't lift it.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

And this little thing as well?

BERNIE WORRELL

But that's what they're paid to do!

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

People are keeping fit. And how many trailers did you have for all the outfits, then?

BERNIE WORRELL

Well, there was about three, like I said, three semis. The Mothership.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

For someone who's not that initiated, can you break down what the difference between all these different project, like the Mothership, Parliament, Funkadelic, and all these different entities were. 'Cause it's not easy to understand, 'cause it seems like it's all the same people, and they all talk in these codes.

BERNIE WORRELL

Well, that was George Clinton's genius. Yeah, same group of musicians recording Funkadelic projects and Parliament stuff, and our offshoot groups: Parlet, Brides of Funkenstein, The Horny Horns, which was Fred Wesley and Maceo. And solo albums. Bootsy, the Rubber Band. It was George's way of tricking the record companies to record Parliament on this label, Funkadelic on another label, but the companies didn't know at the time until it was too late. Same guys. So he made two monies instead of... [laughs] And then spreading it out, the other offshoot groups on other labels.

BERNIE WORRELL

You don't want to know about that. I'm owed a lot of money now, so we shouldn't talk about that, because that will bring resentments back and I'll go nuts.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

Alright, so we stay on the yoga path for now, I guess.

BERNIE WORRELL

Just like with the, uh, sampling.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

We might get to that in a minute then. What was your role in that? Did you have designated roles, or did the roles change in the different bands?

BERNIE WORRELL

I was the music director and kept things in order. You're mentioning Eddie Hazel and Billy, original Funkadelic. They were from the street, you know, but had this feel and I joined the group after being on the road with Maxine Brown. I moved to Detroit after getting a phone call from George, 'cause back in the day he had said when he was able to afford me, he'd make a call. This was years later. I was in Bermuda with Maxine.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

It could be worse than being in Bermuda with her. Were you recording down there?

BERNIE WORRELL

No, she opened for Jimmy Smith. I forget the club. And management said: "I got a call from a George Clinton, wanting to have a meeting at the Apollo." I said: "OK, let's see what he wants." Calls back and says: "George says he's ready." He had moved everyone from Jersey to Detroit, and Maxine's career was on the down end. So, moved from Jersey to Detroit and the rest is history. But what was the question? *[laughs]*

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

It was more like where you sat, or whether there were any defined roles between the different projects or whether it was just the same people...

BERNIE WORRELL

Uh, yeah, I was the musical director and kept the music together, arranging all the different projects, putting - along with George - putting different combinations of musicians for this song, or this song. "This one would be good on bass for this." Stuff like that. And making sure their pitch was correct. Because like I said, they were from the [streets]. I had to tighten stuff up, bring some order into the chaos. But chaos is good, too.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

Did you have different visions for the different projects when they had a different name?

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

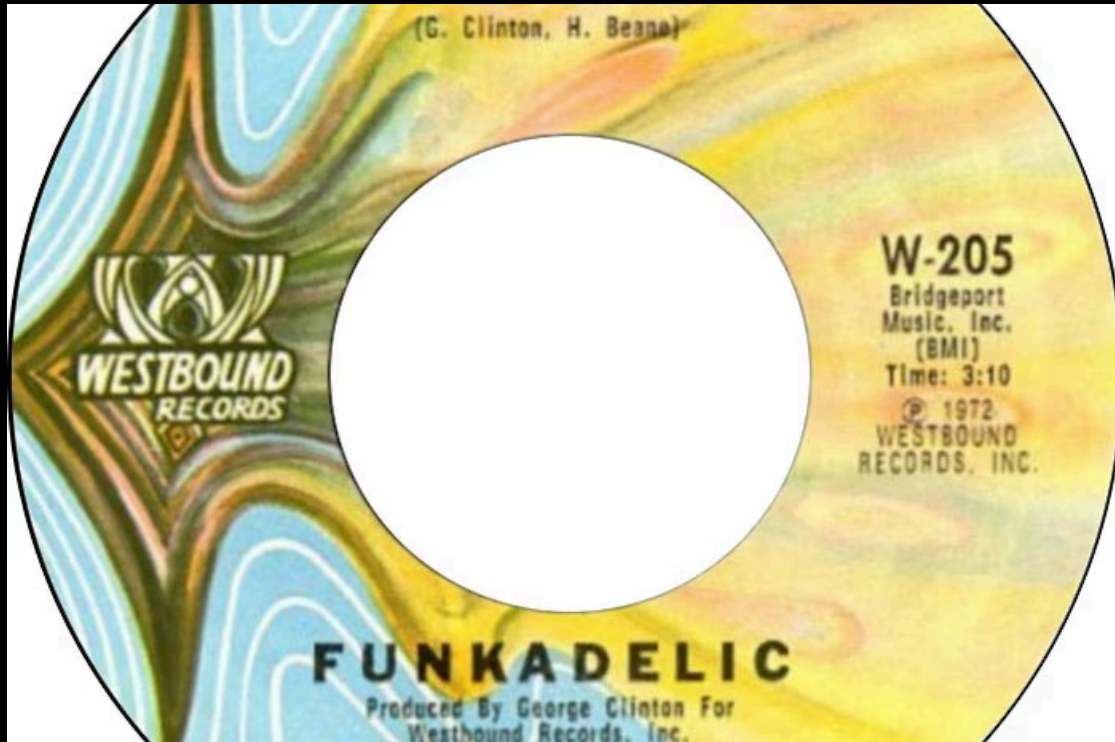
Let's probably play a little bit of music right here.

BERNIE WORRELL

He's a conceptualist, I play.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

How about this one?



Funkadelic – “A Joyful Process”

(music: Funkadelic – “A Joyful Process”)

BERNIE WORRELL

[comments over music] That's classic. That's how my mind thinks. Start out with... it's a hymn. [sings] “Jesus loves me...” Go from there into... it's coming up. Hit me!

[song starts to pick up]

This was my first real string arrangements. I arranged real strings and horns.

[applause]

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

It makes an awful lot of sense when you say that you wrote strings and stuff as well because they sound a lot more, I'd say, like a Moog than a Ravel piece. How did the players react to that when they had to play that? Can you remember?

BERNIE WORRELL

[laughs] Everyone came up and... I was nervous. That was my first attempt at arranging strings and horns. I've had all the classes in college, but, um... Everyone

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

Did they find it hard to play? Because some of the things clearly emulates what you can do with, like, your pitch-bend...

BERNIE WORRELL

Yes, but if you can play, you can play, you can play what's written. And loosen them up and everyone learns, everyone benefits. You mentioned Marcus Belgrave, and Fred Wesley and Maceo, they said, and I didn't know until years later, that they said: "Here comes Bernie with his horn charts." Because I arranged from what's in my head, from keyboardist. But I know the range of each horn. French horns or, you know, cello, or whatever. I just play what I hear, or write what I hear. I guess, I didn't know it at the time, but maybe it was unconventional, I don't know. But I had the pleasure of having Maceo Parker, Fred Wesley from James Brown, and the Brecker Brothers, Michael and Randy. And Rick, he's a trumpeter's trumpeter, from the group Chase, all in one session. The session was in New York and a few years ago I ran into, let's see, which one passed? Randy, I think. Or Michael. One of the Brecker brothers is still living, and he said, you know, my favorite session is that session of your arrangement, which was "Let Me Get the Handcuffs Off You," a P-Funk song. "Gotta take my handcuffs off your mama's"-something, and that was his favorite session. I was nervous about that, but Randy and Michael Brecker playing my charts, along with Fred, that was...

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

Was it kind of hard for them? Because a lot of the guys you mentioned are, like, distinguished jazz cats, and Fred Wesley talks about this quite a lot, how he brought jazz into the funk, and stuff. And you coming from this other world, the more classical world, in a way.

BERNIE WORRELL

That's what I mean. Everything's related. He brought it together. Things happen for a reason. That showed everyone: "See? This is from there, this is from here, we take some from here, some from there," and we make a stew. Soup.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

Well, on that note, I think it's about time we take it to church here.



Parliament – “Mothership Connection”

(music: Parliament - “Mothership Connection”/ applause)

There’s the odd recognizable bit in there that some of us may have heard before. We got a few very brave people to lift this monster out of the basement [referring to the Hammond organ on one side of the couch]. Maybe this is a good time to use it to show us what you actually did there. Would that be possible?

BERNIE WORRELL

If I can remember what I played. I’ll just do another thing.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

Shall I give you another thing and you just take to it?

BERNIE WORRELL

No, ‘cause whatever it is I deal with sound, so a piece of music will be one way on a baby grand; I’ll play the same piece on a Hammond, it’ll be different. I play the same piece on an electric piano, it’ll be different. I play the same piece on a synth, it’ll be different. The sound effects what I do. Same piece, but it’ll be different.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

How about this? I give you another piece and maybe you see what you’re feeling about that.

BERNIE WORRELL

Or I could do with this one, whatever you want.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

You start with this one, just give me the sign.

[Worrell moves to the organ and plays a long, improvisational sequence that blends big dynamic moments with nursery rhymes and other musical references,

And, at special request of the honorary Chairman Mao, here is another track. And maybe if you feel like it at some stage, maybe you wanna...



Funkadelic – “Atmosphere”

(music: Funkadelic - “Atmosphere” / Worrell gets up after a few moments and begins to play along on the organ / goes back to the couch and listens as the song continues and ends / applause)

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

Is there anything that you can recall from that session?

BERNIE WORRELL

The notes. When I hear it now. Eddie Hazel’s one of my favorite guitarists. Very sensitive. We’d just go in and hit it. Hit it and quit it.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

The sensitivity is something that’s pretty striking in there, because I think any present-day mastering or recording engineer would ruin this piece, ‘cause the dynamics are way too high. I mean, the amplitude in that must be, what, 60db or something, and the fadeout at the end was almost a minute.

BERNIE WORRELL

You have to be sensitive, man. You know, you must touch your right, man.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

You’re on record saying that one of your merriest memories was selling out the L.A. Forum. What was that show like?



you can't have fun, we just... playing for the people, for ourselves, and no one expected a hit record or never knew "Flashlight" was going to be a hit. We didn't go in to record to make a hit. Just go in and playin'. So, riding in the limos and all that, coming back from sound check, George and I were in, I looked at him and said, there was just a sea of cars coming from L.A. out to the Forum, it was scary. I looked at him and said: "See what you started?" He looked at me and said: "No, see what you started!"

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

Well, he gave you the call, so you can blame it on him.

BERNIE WORRELL

Well, he gave us the call.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

But I mean, there's also other moments when you, for example, played Madison Square Garden and your gear doesn't show up.

BERNIE WORRELL

Yeah, that was stupid. That has to do with management, and probably somebody else George didn't pay.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

So what did you do?

BERNIE WORRELL

That's not on me, it's on them.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

No, I mean what did you play on that night?

BERNIE WORRELL

I don't remember. Something. That's years ago, man. What day is it today?

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

That's a good question, actually.

BERNIE WORRELL

People come up, say: "Remember you took my picture with you ten years ago," and I say, "No. I don't." Been there, done that. Next. See, I don't tell with the past. It's done.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

A little bit more of that been there, done that.



Funkadelic – “(Not Just) Knee Deep”

(music: Funkadelic – “(Not Just) Knee Deep” / applause)

What were you just reminiscing about there?

BERNIE WORRELL

Philippe Wynne, the lead vocalist. He just made his entrance from The Spinners, I forgot about that.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

Yeah, I guess that one was hard to clear. Or would you just go and incorporate something that if it happened in a session, or would you have to go back to other band and then go like, “Hey, we’re using that line, we’re using that idea, or we’re quoting it.”

BERNIE WORRELL

The track was done, and Phillippe had joined P-Funk for a period of time there and he just came by the studio, said: “Alright, put Phillippe on.” Well, if you know from The Spinners, he’s ad-libbing. He’d just roll tape. Get that Phillippe Wynne sound, feel. Man. That one almost brought tears. Anyway.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

What’s crazy when you know a song mostly by DJs playing, like, a certain segment of it, or people just sampling it, is that when you go back to the entire piece, is the mood is so different, and it’s also going to so many different places over the course of, what is it? Four minutes and 30? It’s almost mournful, it’s almost a piece of tragedy in there, and gets upbeat again.

BERNIE WORRELL

It’s a journey. It’s a journey. Don’t stay in one place.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT



just go on the emotion and the arrangements. I would arrange stuff. You go where it takes you. [laughs]

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

Well, that took you very far. And also I believe now that a few things hopefully are settled. It still provides you with like a nice pension check funds, right? With all the people that have sampled that over the years?

BERNIE WORRELL

Don't talk about that. That's one of the things that's being worked on now, haven't gotten all the sample...

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

Still worked on? Damn!

BERNIE WORRELL

I'll get pissed off. You don't want me to get mad.

[laughter]

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

No, we don't want that. We don't want that. We don't want that at all.

BERNIE WORRELL

Except I like getting mad sometimes, but you don't wanna see that.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

Well, now it seems we're on the Internet again. Let's see whether it's actually playing. 'Cause there's a little video I'd like to show you to get a better idea of what things looked like back then. Let's see if we can make this work.



Yeah, just another day in the city, it seems, huh? So is this what your life was like every day?

BERNIE WORRELL

Is this what my life was like back then? Their life. I had part of it. It wasn't wild and crazy like that. I can only speak for myself, the antics and whatnot. You said my life, it wasn't that crazy. That's a bunch of wild and crazy guys, but we were having fun. My part, I was the nerd. I was the nerd of the group, so I was more laid back. But I would partake of the antics, fusing it together with the music. I could tell you wild and crazy, or you could see yourself from... *[laughs]* ...let that speak about... George is a conceptualist. Didn't necessarily agree with all of his philosophies, but everything melded together and everything worked, and it was a sign, it was the times. That's what it was. That's what it is. It's another thing now. Depending on how you look at things and how, you know, what's in the mind of the beholder. Yeah. That was funkadelic for real. Funkadelic psychedelic. Meld the two together. It is what it is. "Cosmic Slop" is one of the national anthems. Says what it says: "Cosmic Slop." *[laughs]* But at the same time, I could hear my mother cry, I could hear my mother cry. It's a piece of history.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

Fast-forwarding. We're running a little bit out of time, and there's a bunch of things we could touch upon, but you were sort of the more-or-less unofficial member of another group, and we'd like to hit on that a little bit.

BERNIE WORRELL

"Burning Down the House."



Talking Heads – "Burning Down the House"



TORSTEN SCHMIDT

Both rhythmically and sonically, that's very different energy now. So what has happened in the meantime?

BERNIE WORRELL

From that until now?

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

No, no, no.

BERNIE WORRELL

In between P-Funk and... Well, sonically it's a little different but the rhythm was there, because they were... Talking Heads, I didn't even know who they were, at first. Talking Heads, when I was approached, said: "Who are you?" But come to find out later, David [Byrne], Tina and Chris used to sneak into P-Funk shows when they were art students in Providence, Rhode Island. So I said: "Ah, OK, so..." They knew what was up and they were fans. And so they bring, integrate, the rhythm and the feel, and mix it. The rhythm is spare, because that's Steve Scales playing percussion. Chris Frantz just keeps a straight beat. The rhythm is around it. The pulse is there, and then the pulse is there. And Alex Weir from the Brothers Johnson on rhythm guitar.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

From "Strawberry Letters"? Alright, crazy.

BERNIE WORRELL

Nona Hendryx was there, from Labelle, myself, Adrian Belew. So we had all these entities integrated into the four and enlarged it in there.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

I was gonna say, when I was a kid and saw Talking Heads on German television, I didn't see any of the guys that you just mentioned.

BERNIE WORRELL

No, that was before. That was, I guess, in... like I said, I didn't know who they were. I got a phone call asking me if I'd be interested. I said: "Well, I don't know..." Jerry Harrison, we're close. And David. And Chris and Tina had sit in on a couple of shows with my group. So it was a fusion, a fusing of what they did before, along with the funk.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

So how did it work? Would you be called in for the recordings and more or less doing session work?

BERNIE WORRELL

What I liked about it is they kind of worked like P-Funk in the studio. We'd just go in, there'd be some ideas down sometimes, and then other times just a jam, then other times I'd come in and overdub the parts of a set track. And live, it's whatever I



TORSTEN SCHMIDT

From the sounds of it, you moved on to a different synthesizer aesthetic as well.

BERNIE WORRELL

Yeah, Jerry had Prophet-5s. And of course the Clavinet was there.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

Speaking of the Clavinet, who was first playing that through phasers and stuff, you or Stevie [Wonder]?

BERNIE WORRELL

I don't know. On the track that you played with the strings, my first string, everybody thinks it's Clavinet, but it's the RMI piano. And Stevie had gone to, it's called Wonderlove Music, music store in Detroit. I had gone the next day, but they told us at the store: "Stevie was at the store yesterday and got one," and I was the second person that got one. So I don't know. Who did what first, and "blah blah blah blah." Who cares? We're doing it.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

Right. On that note, maybe a very different...

BERNIE WORRELL

Stevie and I were together at a NAMM show. I don't know if you saw that a few months ago. There were pictures that were pasted on Facebook, which I don't do.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

You were talking about conceptualists, and you were also instrumental in a recording with another, different conceptualist, I guess.



Fela Kuti – "Army Arrangement"



BERNIE WORRELL

Fela Kuti.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

Where did you record this?

BERNIE WORRELL

Uh, it's a Bill Laswell production.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

Who you did a lot of things with as well, right?

BERNIE WORRELL

Yes, still do. I keep forgetting... that was Green Point, Brooklyn. When Bill had the studio over there. There's a solo piece that's coming up, with Bill co-producing. Just myself and a baby grand piano. And Bill's concept was just pick some pieces and you just elongate them, just play very slow, and then he's adding his, you know, the Laswell touch. What do you call it? Just sounds and, it's being funded by the Japanese, but yeah, Fela Kuti. Yeah, another conceptualist. He and George are... Bill made, not a mistake, but had George in the studio also and got stuck with the hotel bill and all that. But if you know George Clinton, then he should've known. But the two of them together is two conceptualists.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

Yeah, different energy, yeah. I can imagine.

BERNIE WORRELL

But again, everything came together.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

Before we close on something else, I wanted to verify: are there probably any questions from you guys? There is a mic running around.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Uh, OK.

BERNIE WORRELL

[clears ears] When you see me do this, my high end comes back. Then they close up again. So, I can hear you.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I was gonna ask you, I love Funkadelic. I love the Maggot Brain album, and I wanna know if you were in the studio when Eddie Hazel did that song, and when they added the extra guitar parts and all that. And if you remember how that made you feel after you heard it.

BERNIE WORRELL



played it for, like I said, first time in years, three, four days ago. Because it brings tears to me.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I had one more question. There's a lot of songs where George Clinton does that song about the "jealous mother of all hoes". I want to know if that ever got on your nerves, 'cause he did that on a lot of songs. Well, not a lot, but he did that same verse multiple times, like did you ever feel any kind of way hearing that? With the song that you were doing?

BERNIE WORRELL

Did it what?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Did it ever make you feel any kind of way, like him doing it multiple times?

BERNIE WORRELL

No, 'cause like I said, I pay attention to words maybe when I'm in the studio, which I didn't get credit for, but co-producing by putting George's voice on a track, or backgrounds. 'Cause they didn't have the ears like I did. Say, when the pitch is off, or "straighten this out, straighten that out," or "couldn't understand that," or "you popped on the mic." Stuff like that. So, in production, yeah, I paid attention to words. But after that, I don't really care about words. Except when I have to memorise it, which I can't. Where people like for me to sing. I'd rather accompany the vocalist than have to sing, remember words. I'd rather play and let the vocalist sing, 'cause if I had the lyric sheets there in front of me, I'd still forget them. Look at that 'cause I'm not concentrating on words. My words are sounds and notes. So I think something has to do with he keeps repeating that, like you said, or has a few times, something in his psyche, or that happened to him, or somewhere.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

He thought it was necessary.

BERNIE WORRELL

I don't know. Never asked about it. Don't care about it.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Hey, thank you.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Hi. It's a pleasure. America Eats Its Young is one of my all-time favorites, so...

BERNIE WORRELL

She's still eating 'em.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I'd just like, if you don't mind, to talk about a little about those sessions, because tracks like "You Hit The Nail On The Head," or "Biological Speculation," "Loose Booty," sound-wise there's nothing touching it for me. I found that very record so

BERNIE WORRELL

Yeah, George and I had just moved to Toronto to get out of Detroit and all that stuff. [*Knocks plant beside couch*] Excuse me. Fresh air, man. Clean. And so the headspace was different, and we wanted to get away from the same old thing. See, I get bored quick. I'm not going to do the same thing every [time]. Like I said, "Been there, done that, next." What's next? I'm always searching. Taste. I wanna taste something different. And we wanted to venture somewhere else. And just do a different feel, different engineer. We had two new members from a local group in Plainfield, New Jersey. Their group broke up, so we got the guitarist and bass player from the US, that was a group from back home, and moved them up to Canada. So that was a different feel. And they're from the church. That was Garry Shider, who... we lost him last year. And "Boogie" Cordell Mosson, who just passed a week ago. So we were just trying, experimenting.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

There was a lot of overdubs, or mostly live recording sessions. A lot of overdubs.

BERNIE WORRELL

Both. Basic tracks, then overdubs. Horns. Yeah, both. Lotta hash.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Hi, very nice to see you. I was just wondering how do you feel to be celebrated today by such a young crowd, the Red Bull Music Academy, everybody knows your song.

BERNIE WORRELL

I'm scared. I scared.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Maybe they never saw the Mothership, you know, landing, or whatever. Everybody's young, and we still love you, and do you think it's like a revival for you? How do you feel about that?

BERNIE WORRELL

I'm honored. I didn't know it was that huge. But thank god for the gift and thank the people I was sent to teach. I'm thankful and I appreciate. And I helped. You know, from that commercial. Just did my little two cents. Every musician or artist that have gone on before us, before me, and which you guys and girls will be doing for those who come after you. Just a circle.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

I think we have one over here. Right there. In the corner.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Hello, sir. Thank you very much...

BERNIE WORRELL

I'm Bernie, man. You don't need to say that.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

recommendation, you can tell us how, you know, because I don't know, my partners, but we are looking to get involved more and more in the music world, and being OK with it. Living it. Great. I don't know if you understand. Being... I don't know. Flow, you know?

BERNIE WORRELL

Having the flow?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

In a fluent way. That's what I'm asking. How do you see to us, to modern music, what music are you listening now? And if you have some, a human recommendation to us in music.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

I think, in essence, it's about what music you're listening to right now that's current, and that you're feeling.

BERNIE WORRELL

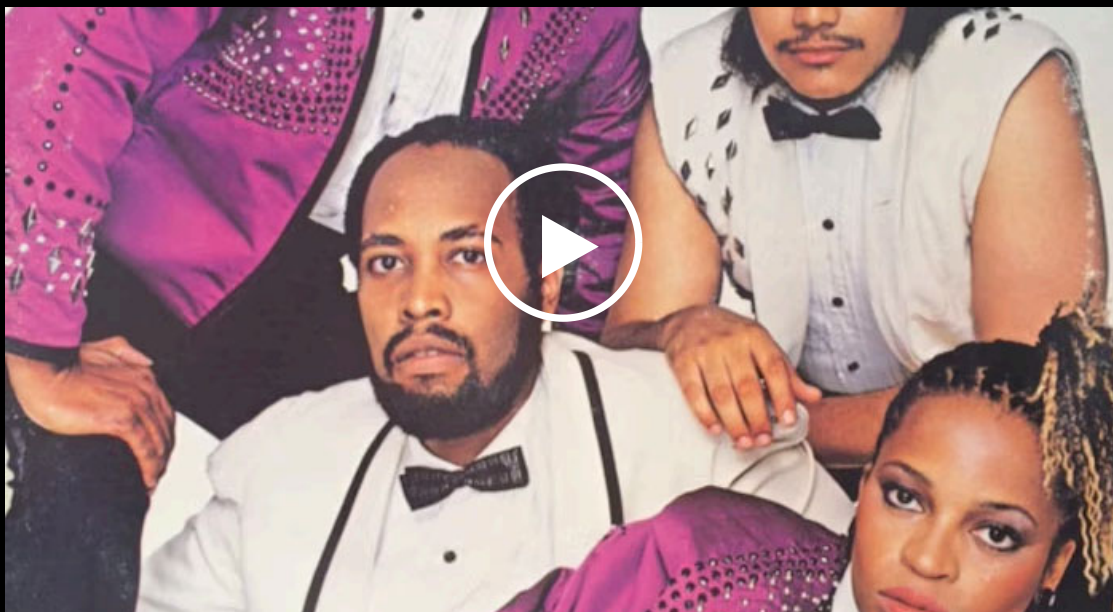
I'm sorry, but I don't... someone asked before. I listen to public [radio], college stations, and reggae. There's not too much out here for me, that's for me, that I listen to. Or public radio and the oldies station. Because that's, for me, where melody, melody and just the feel. It's what I was brought up on. And for the flow, you have to live life. And then open up and listen to all musics, listen to all genres of music, and then from what you glean, or what you receive, if you receive anything, take what you hear. You gotta listen, first of all. You gotta listen to it. Playing and listening are two different things. You have to listen and hear. And if something hits you, take it and make it your own. Not necessarily copy it, but take it, you learn. It's embedded here after listening. And then something will come and you take it and re-weave it or whatnot, and then let it flow out. Create your own thing from the influences that you've listened to. But try to listen to all types of music. You may not like it. If you like it or not, take what you like. But at least give it a chance. You know? I feel that you gain more from listening to the whole sphere. *[laughs]* I have dentures, so I can't let 'em come out. *[laughs]* Listen to everything, so you won't be narrow-minded. I hope that answers *[your question]*.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Thank you very much.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

I'd like to close off with finding out about another recording that you seem to be involved in, but it's not really clear to which degree. So maybe as a little hint, we play a bit of it and see what you can...



Mtume – “Juicy Fruit”

(music: Mtume - “Juicy Fruit”)

BERNIE WORRELL

“Juicy Fruit.”

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

Yeah, I guess your hands give the answer.

BERNIE WORRELL

Mtume. On lead vocal. *[song fades]*

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

Were you involved in more Mtume stuff? You played on more Mtume stuff, right?

BERNIE WORRELL

Uh, maybe a couple other tracks, but this is his big hit, him and Tawatha on vocals. I’m playing the Rhodes on this track and singing in the background. *[laughs]* They kind of forced me to, I didn’t wanna sing on it.

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

Maybe it would be a nice thing, like, if you could remember it, and you do something similar ‘cause it’s such a New York tune as well, and to send us over to the lunch. And maybe if we could go back to, and have like a...

[brings track back up]

BERNIE WORRELL

Let that play, I wanna see if it’s tuning.

[plays organ along “Juicy Fruit” / applause]

TORSTEN SCHMIDT

Ladies and gentlemen, Bernie Worrell everybody. Let’s give him a big hand.



On a different note

George Clinton → The head of the Mothership lands on the Academy couch for a rare, intimate chat

Tom Tom Club → From Talking Heads to Mariah Carey, this couple have helped shape modern pop